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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, MAY 3, 2007

In Today's Papers

Turkey Debates Parliamentary Elections Date, Presidency  
All papers report Turkey's Parliamentary Constitutional Committee recommended Wednesday general elections be held on July 22 instead of June 24 as proposed in a bill by the ruling AKP. The government is also pushing for a series of constitutional changes that would allow the people to elect the president for a consecutive two five-year terms, reduce the government's term from five years to four and decrease the minimum age for election to parliament to 25. The bill will be debated in the parliament today. Opposition Anavatan Party leader Erkan Mumcu expressed "full support" to the changes proposed by AKP. Opposition DYP leader Mehmet Agar expressed support as well, saying a decision for early elections should have been made before the Constitutional Court decision. The main opposition CHP, however, demands election of the new president by a new parliament, and not by popular vote.

Prime Minister Erdogan told his ruling AKP group yesterday the new president should be elected directly by the people. "We will, through a referendum if necessary, take this issue to the nation to see that president is elected by direct popular vote," Erdogan said.

The new first round of presidential election will be held on May 6 in the parliament, to be followed by May 9, 12, and 15 if the quorum of 367 cannot be reached in the first round. Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, the sole candidate standing, said if participation of 367 MPs is not secured in the first voting, the other rounds would not be held.

Deputy Prime Minister Abdullatif Sener and AKP deputy group chief Dengir Mehmet Firat said outgoing President Sezer will remain in his post until a new president is elected, as stipulated by article 102 of the Turkish Constitution.

Editorial Commentary on Elections in Turkey

Derya Sazak wrote in the mainstream daily Milliyet: "Our priority

should be democracy right now. PM Erdogan described the recent court decision as a 'bullet fired at democracy,' a statement which does nothing but increase tension. In fact both PM Erdogan's negative comment on the court decision and the military warning have cast shadows on democracy, but this can be ended through elections. The government should refrain from further political maneuvers in order not to accelerate the crisis atmosphere, and focus on the elections. The newly elected parliament should elect the new president. The ruling AKP failed to manage the presidential election process; let's hope they will manage to carry Turkey to the elections as soon as possible."

#### Secretary Rice on Turkish Presidential Developments

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Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Yeni Safak and others report Secretary Rice said in response to a question on whether the US "feels the same way" as the EU with regard to the presidential process in Turkey, "The US fully supports Turkish democracy and its constitutional processes, and that means that the election, the electoral system and the results of the electoral system and the results of the constitutional process have to be upheld. Yes, the US would be in a similar position."

#### Baykal Calls for Unity with DSP

All papers report opposition Anavatan MP Suleyman Saribas has tabled a bill that would allow two or more parties to form alliances in the parliamentary elections. The main opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal told his party group yesterday he wants "unification" with Zeki Sezer's DSP. "This is not political maneuvering on the eve of general elections," Baykal said, "Despite only getting one percent of the vote in the last elections, DSP has a respected institutional identity in Turkish politics, thanks to their late leader Bulent Ecevit." Sezer said he would respond to Baykal Thursday after

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discussions with his party members.

#### Education Minister Visits Buyukanit to Reduce Strains

Hurriyet and Sabah report on Tuesday, Education Minister Huseyin Celik called on Turkish General Staff (TGS) chief Yasar Buyukanit to explain that his ministry has no ties with the alleged anti-secular activities held last month in several provinces to celebrate the birth of Prophet Muhammad. Celik said inspections were underway into the anti-secular activities. Celik reportedly told Buyukanit the TGS should have warned the government instead of posting a statement on the Internet.

#### PKK Member Killed, 4 Captured in Mardin

Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report the son of Suleyman Anik, pro-Kurdish DTP mayor of Dargecit town in the province of Mardin, was killed by Turkish security forces during a raid on a house where four other PKK militants were injured. Police found three Kalashnikov rifles, four cartridge clips and five hand grenades in the house.

#### Editorial Commentary on US 2006 Country Reports on Terrorism

Kubilay Celik wrote in the nationalist daily Tercuman: "The State Department's annual terrorism report for 2006...is a catalogue of US mistakes. Let's analyze the report: It was the US which bombed Afghanistan. It was the US which started a war in Iraq and dragged the country into a civil war. In sum, the US is the primary reason for the growing terror in the region, but it sees no harm in blaming others for that. The US really needs to look in the mirror first before accusing others. As for the Turkey part of the report, the PKK was extensively covered, mentioning the fact that the PKK uses northern Iraq as a headquarters and had spread out to Europe like an octopus. The terrorist organization was defined as an organized crime gang engaging in money laundering and human trafficking. That's very accurate. But the question is why does the US still wait and do nothing to prevent the PKK's actions? Is it because of the promises given to the Kurdish groups in Northern Iraq?"

TV Highlights

NTV, 6.00 A.M.

## Domestic News

- Former parliament speaker Husamettin Cindoruk said the presidential crisis has been resolved by the timely intervention of Constitutional Court.
- President Sezer will hold his weekly meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan and the chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Yasar Buyukanit.
- 10th Eurasia Economy Summit is to be held in Istanbul today, with the participation of 30 countries.

## International News

- The confederation of European workers' unions has condemned violent police intervention during May Day protests in Istanbul.
- The US Commission on International Religious Freedom said religious freedom is lagging in Turkey.
- Italy's Prime Minister Romano Prodi said Turkey's EU accession, a "historical fact," needs the support of the European public opinion and the harmony in the country.
- German Interior Ministry gathered together Muslim groups in Berlin yesterday for a second conference in nine months to tackle growing alienation between Germans and Muslim immigrants.

WILSON